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NRO REVIEW COMPLETED

2 January 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director (Research)

SUBJECT : Contingency Plan for North Vietnam Missions

[REDACTED]

REFERENCE : Above Document

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1. In reference to the attached critique of the North Vietnam cover story by General Carter and Mr. Kirkpatrick, I agree that a story is not the most desirable from the CIA viewpoint, but from a National viewpoint it is the only realistic course of action.

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2. The philosophy behind this type of cover story is based upon three basic principles:

a. In the event of the capture alive of the pilot, he obviously has to say something.

b. Highest authority does not wish to put this country in a position again as we found ourselves in May 1960, where evidence of a live pilot provided bona fide proof that our country was caught in a lie in the cover story. The adverse reaction both abroad and at home would seem to indicate that we should not get caught in this position again. I believe that this is our present national policy. However, I must admit that this is just an assumption in view of the absence of any written or specifically stated position.

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c. If the policy is to tell the truth as far as it goes and not be caught in the lie again, then obviously the pilot must either admit or claim to be military or a civilian intelligence collector. Here again, there is no stated or written national policy as far as I know. I believe this question can only be and should only be a decision by higher authority as to whether he prefers, in the event of capture of the pilot, to admitting to a military operation over another sovereign territory or admitting to a penetration by an intelligence collection vehicle over that territory. From what little I know of international law, the former is an act of war and cannot be justified, while the latter is frowned upon but usually accepted as a normal peacetime intelligence effort such as is carried on by all nations. This decision is strictly one of value judgment, and I recommend that this specific question be brought to the attention of higher authority so that he may have the opportunity to determine the policy which he desires to follow.

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4. I cannot think of any other cover story that is plausible and compatible with the above philosophy. I certainly would welcome any suggestions and, of course, if directed, will design any type of story desired.

(Signed) Jack C. Ledford

AD/OSA:JCL:jr

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